

CASE

OF THE

OWNERS and MASTERS

Of SHIPS Employed in the

COAL-TRADE.



HERE are above a Thousand Sail of Ships constantly employed in Carrying Coals to the different Parts of *England, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Germany, France, Flanders, and Holland*; and the Market at *London* is the Standard, and settles the Price, for the most Part, for all other Markets; and Two Parts in Three of all the Coals that are brought to *London*, are bought by the Artful Management of about *Fifteen Lightermen*, who are, with Others of *Lesser Ability*, Incorporated by *Act of Parliament*; and by their Constant Meetings, and Agreements, have brought the whole Trade under such a Direction, That very few, if any of the Masters, knew what they were to have for their Coals, 'til they were in the *Lightermen's Possession*, and then they pay'd for them as they thought fit: And, If any Master insisted to know what Price he should have, before he set his Ship to Work, or desired to Bargain before Witness, They either would not agree with him at All: Or, If they did, They would, frequently, take only a Small Part of his Coals, and then Drop him, and let him Lye by, till they brought him to their Terms: And if any Master Sold Part of his Loading to a Stranger, the Combined *Lightermen* would not buy the rest, nor Deal with that Master, till he submitted to their Measures. And the Coal-Owners themselves felt the Effect of their Power: For, Whenever they pleased, they would give any Gentlemen's Coals an Ill Name, and refuse Buying them, till the Owner was obliged to give them *Exorbitant Underhand Premiums*.

BY these and such like Practices, too many to be Inserted herein, This Great Adventure, which costs upwards of Twelve Hundred Thousand Pounds, is Reduced not to be Worth Five; And the Stock for Carrying on the Trade almost Lost; And the Seamen, Bred and Employed in that Navigation, mightily Diminished, and fallen to Decay; Above One Hundred Masters in three Towns having been brought to Want, in a few Years.

WHICH (To prevent Our Utter Ruin) put us under an Unavoidable Necessity to Employ Agents and Factors to Dispose of our Coals, and Deliver our Ships in Order; which has ever been Esteemed a Reasonable and Fair Way of Proceeding, and is Practised, almost in all Cases, both for Justice-Sake, and to avoid Confusion.

WHICH Method (if Observed) in Delivering the Coal-Ships, will promote Fair and Honest Dealing, and have the following Good Effects:

Imprimis, I T Will disable the Combin'd *Lighter-Men* from Imposing upon the Coal-Owners, by Marking any particular Sort of Coals and not Vending them without unlawfull and underhand Premiums.

Item, I T Will Likewise Disable the *Lighter-Men* from Imposing upon the poor defenceless Masters, by Delaying them as long as they please and paying for their Coals, what they think fit.

Item. I T Also will prevent the City of *London* from being Imposed upon by making publick the true Price of Coals in the Pool.

I F The Proprietors of one Thousand Sail of Ships, prime Cost above Twelve hundred thousand Pounds, are not allowed Agents and Factors to Sell their Coals, to avoid such unprecedented Impositions, so long laboured under, I T is what never was denied to any Person or Body of People in *Great Britain*.

A N D If this, or some such other Expedient, as the *Honourable House of Commons*, in their Great Wisdom shall think meet, be not Granted, till the *Honourable House* shall have more Leisure to provide more effectually for the Preservation and Safety of so Grand a Concern to the Nation, as well as their own Particulars; They will most of them not be able to Come to Sea: Having too long, already, wasted their Substance without any Advantage.

N. B. I F The City of *London*, by any Malicious Insinuation. should be jealous, That the Navigation has any Intention to Impose upon them, in Raising the Price of Coals; They are willing, at any Time, to Submit the Examination of their Accounts to any Honourable, Judicious Person, or Body of Men; and desire Nothing More than Common Insurance for their Sole Profit and Advantage.

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